

Lunch in the great outdoors



Lunch in the great outdoors should be a memorable event, no matter what the menus is. (Mark Rackay/ Special to the MDP)

Growing up, our noon meal was the big meal of the day. We called it dinner. Supper came along toward evening and was usually something light and left over from dinner. But whenever you went to the woods for the day, it was called lunch.

When I took off for a day of fishing with a couple of the kids from neighboring farms, lunch was whatever we could steal from the kitchen without getting caught. I usually went for as many cookies I could carry, sweet rolls or leftover biscuits from breakfast. If there was any leftover bacon or a piece of pie, it was taken also. The idea was to not get caught.

All of us kids would pile up the food we looted and have a feast for our noontime snack on the bank of the creek we were fishing. There was always that one kid who brought vegetables, oranges or apples, even though we had previously explained to him to bring proper lunch foods. The health food kid usually got the apples and oranges thrown at him.

The standard lunch of an outdoor person consists of a couple sandwiches, usually peanut butter and jelly, an apple, candy



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

bar, a handful of cookies, and a Stanley thermos of strong coffee. Talk about monotonous.

I have eaten a million of those lunches. With a lunch like that waiting for me back at the truck, it's not hard to fish or hunt all day without taking a lunch break.

My wife makes me a lunch like that. There will be a sandwich, cookies, candy and an apple. When I get home, she will say, "I see you did not eat your apple."

I told her to start leaving the apple at home because I was never going to eat it. She packs one anyway, and if I get her mad, she'll throw in carrot sticks too.

It does not have to be that way. If that describes your lunch routine, you

are missing the best part of a day in the woods. We need to remember why we are out there and let the magical therapy of the out of doors heal the wounds of everyday life in the world back in town.

A fire alone transforms an ordinary lunch break into an event. Just having a small campfire opens the door for many little things that can make the dull sandwich a feast in the outdoors.

That cold bologna and cheese sandwich in your pack can be wrapped in aluminum foil, instead of a plastic bag, and roasted over the fire, toasting one side, then flipping to toast the other. In a matter of minutes, you have a hot sandwich, instead of the usual.

In some of the Canadian Provinces, especially Ontario, a shore lunch is a tradition. The noontime meal consists of your morning catch fileted, battered in condensed milk, flour and corn flakes, and fried over a hot campfire.

Throw in some fried potatoes, a pot of coffee and some homemade cookies for dessert, and you have the complete Northwoods experience.

Anyone who has moose hunted in Canada will

tell you that rain, wind, and damp conditions are to be expected. The place moose live is just one big bog, so to hunt them, you are going to get wet, cold and tired.

Lunchtime would find us taking a break in the birch trees. We would start with a campfire to dry us off and allow the boots to dry a bit near the fire. Birch bark, by the way, is an excellent fire starter, even when wet. Once the fire was hot enough, the guide produced a couple of sirloin tip steaks.

We cut a foot and a half long green stick from a willow and sharpened both ends. I hung the steak on one end over the fire and placed the other firmly into the ground.

The steak hung nicely near the edge of the flames. After a few minutes, I changed ends on the steak and finished it off over the flames. I have had steaks in expensive restaurants, but never had one taste as good as that steak I devoured with my hunting knife in the Yukon.

We boiled up some water in a small can and made some cowboy coffee, the kind you chew as much as drink. After a couple cups of that,

followed by a short nap by that warm fire, and the afternoon hunt was back on. That lunch in the birch trees was one of the best parts of the trip.

With a little planning, a lunch break can be a very enjoyable experience in the outdoors, be it alongside a creek you are fishing, or in the aspens on an elk hunt. Instead of just wrapped cold foods, think about something you can cook very easily over a campfire.

It needs to be something light and easy to carry along with you in your pack. You can get more extravagant if you are within walking distance to your vehicle, as you won't have to carry all the fixin's with you.

Fresh tea or coffee alone is enough to justify a lunchtime fire, especially in cold or wet weather. A tin can with a wire handle, so you can suspend from a stick over the fire makes as good tea as the finest china teapot.

You might find a flat can that fits nicely in your pack. Something that holds about a pint of water is perfect. Throw in a couple sandwiches to heat up, some tea bags, a couple candy bars, and you are all set.

If you have the time, a couple small potatoes thrown on the coals for 30 to 40 minutes would go great with a couple steaks. It really does not take up much room and you can do most of the prep work, like buttering the potato and wrapping in aluminum foil, at home.

Making a hot lunch while in the field really kicks up your outdoor game a notch. It has become one of my favorite parts of the trip. When I get home, my wife still says, "you didn't eat your apple."

To which I respond, "no, but I ate the candy and cookies."

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

BLM seeks comments on plan for fee increases at four campgrounds in Gunnison and Hinsdale counties

The Bureau of Land Management is seeking public comments through Sept. 21 on a draft business plan to allow for regular fee increases at four Gunnison Field Office campgrounds located in Gunnison and Hinsdale Counties.

The proposed fee increases are based on a fair market analysis of fees charged at comparable public and private campgrounds in the Crested Butte and Lake City areas and at nearby U.S. Forest Service campgrounds.

"We look forward to hearing from the public and our part-

ners as we work to improve recreational opportunities in the Gunnison Field Office," said Gunnison Field Manager Jon Kaminsky.

"Constructive feedback helps shape the future management of these recreation sites."

The proposed fee increases would apply to the Oh Be Joyful Campground (including River Flats), Mill Creek Campground, Red Bridge Campground and The Gate Campground.

Labor, supplies, and maintenance costs for these

campgrounds have increased significantly over the past two decades and current fee revenue has not kept pace. Revenue generated through camping fees is used to directly fund campground projects and enables the BLM to address maintenance and capital improvement needs at these sites.

Regular campground maintenance includes the cleaning and pumping of restrooms, repair and replacement of picnic tables and fire rings, and regular testing of drinking

water systems at Mill Creek and The Gate campgrounds. Fee revenue would also fund additional park ranger patrols in the campgrounds.

When preparing the business plan, the BLM recognized that natural areas and recreational opportunities on public lands are essential to the health, well-being, and prosperity of American families and communities. The Southwest Resource Advisory Council unanimously supported the fee increase proposal at its June 2022 meeting.

To review the draft business plan, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/3btmn6nh>.

Submit comments through Sept. 21 by email to blm_co_gu_admin@blm.gov (Subject: Draft Campground Business Plan) or by U.S. mail to BLM Gunnison Field Office, Attn: Draft Campground Business Plan, 2500 East New York Ave., Gunnison, CO 81230.

For more information or questions on the draft plan, contact BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner Jim Lovelace at 970-642-4953 or jlovelac@blm.gov.